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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Housekeepers' Chat — Mon., Dec. 19/27

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "My Kitchen Window Box." (Takes place of "Marketing Tips for the Holiday Hostess" which will be discussed later.) Today's program contains advice on how to raise such flavorings and garnishes as parsley, mint, chives, sweet basil, and so forth, in the kitchen window box; a dinner menu; and a recipe. Information from Bureaus of Plant Industry and Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

W.R.B., my friend the Garden Specialist, of the Department of Agriculture, is responsible for the subject of today's talk. You remember, not long ago, when I called on W.R.B., to answer some questions about houseplants. He answered the questions, and I sent him a copy of the green Radio Cookbook.

Evidently, he likes the recipes, for he wrote me a very nice letter, thanking me for the cookbook. In this letter, he also told me how I might raise such plants as parsley and mint, and watercress, in my kitchen window box, and use them as flavorings and garnishes, in the winter time.

His letter contains so many good suggestions that I'm going to share it with you, in a minute. The other day I read something about the importance of serving food attractively. Lunch room and cafeteria managers have found that if they serve two dishes, of the same food, exactly alike, except for a garnish or a bit of color, the most attractive food is always selected first.

According to this article, "If you do not believe in this magic influence of color, form, and general esthetic value of food, consider the origin, the instant success, and the enormous popularity, of the Ice Cream Sundae. It is the same story of the nameless gingerbread man, compared with the identical mixture, baked in the same old way, and served on the same old plate. Many of us have never outgrown the age of the gingerbread man, though the feeling now manifests itself in many different ways.

"French pastry owes much of its charm to a similar psychological process. With a fancy name, aristocratic decorations, and impressive presentation, by an obliging waiter, in a fashionable eating place, familiar dishes frequently assume the role of something mysteriously clever, and quite beyond the thought of domestic duplication. Analysis often proves the contrary. The basic recipe you find you probably know, and all the attractive effects of garnishes and decoration, can easily be reproduced, in your own kitchen."

That's all of the article. Now I'll read you the letter from W.R.B., the Garden Specialist, Then I'll broadcast a dinner menu. This is the letter:

"Dear Aunt Sammy: We tried your recipe for an omelet the other day. It certainly was fine. The only thing you failed to mention, in connection with the omelet, was to garnish it, on the platter, with one or two sprigs of parsley. I

suppose that it would taste just as good without the parsley, but I always like that touch of decoration, you might call it.

"Some people think it is too much trouble to order parsley from the store, and keep it wrapped in a moist cloth, in the ice-box. We get around the trouble of keeping the parsley, by having two or three plants growing in our kitchen window-box. You see, we have a large south window, in our kitchen, where it is always warm and sunshiny, when the sun shines. Each fall, we fill the box with the very best soil, and plant all sorts of flavoring and garnishing plants in it. Just now, we have parsley, watercress, mint, sweet basil, and chives, all growing in our kitchen window-box. It does seem odd, that plants belonging to so many different families, would get along together, but they do.

"Parsley is one of the easiest plants to grow in the window-box. It takes only two or three plants to furnish all the leaves you need during the winter, for garnishing. We always have a row of parsley in the garden during the summer. Late in the fall, we simply lift three or four nice plants, with a little soil adhering to their roots, and plant them in the window-box.

"But before going further, perhaps I had better tell you how this window-box is built. First, I had a carpenter make a wooden box, of 7/8 inch cypress boards. The box is 8 inches wide, 7 inches deep, inside measurements, and just long enough to fit the window. Next, I took the box to a tinner, and had it lined with galvanized iron. The seams are soldered, so that the box will hold water. About an inch from the bottom, I had the tinner insert a false bottom, with a number of holes punched in it. At one corner he inserted a tube, through which water can be poured into the bottom of the box. A drain-pipe was soldered into the bottom of the box, and fitted with a rubber cork. Then I had two brackets fastened to the window sill. After the box was in place, I painted it, to harmonize with the walls. This was all done during the summer. The box containing the soil and plants, was kept in the garden, until nearly time for early fall frosts.

"Now, going back to the plants. We have a mint-bed in the garden, from which we cut mint for our iced tea during the summer. A few sprays of the mint, with the roots attached, were planted in the box. They furnish mint for flavoring, especially for making mint sauce in the winter time.

"Then there is the watercress. Most people think that watercress can be grown only in shallow water. As a matter of fact, it will grow just as well on soil, provided it has some lime to feed upon. I simply buy a small bunch of watercress at the market, and stand it in a little water, to which a pinch of lime has been added. In a few days, the roots begin to form. Then I plant these little sprays of watercress in my window-box, and water them from time to time, with a little lime water. They do fine, all winter.

"Some folks like the leaves of sweet basil, for flavoring. Sweet basil can be grown in the window-box,

One of the easiest plants to grow in the window-box is chives, which, as you know, is a little onion, the tender tops of which are used for flavoring stews, and other dishes. If you have chives growing in the garden, it is an easy matter to cut out a block of earth, which is thickly set with the plants, and place it in one end of the window-box. If you don't happen to have them growing, you can buy

a clump of the plants at the seedstore, separate them slightly, and plant them in the window-box. They will grow in the south window, and it does not seem to matter how much you cut their leaves for flavoring purposes -- more leaves will grow to take their places.

"Once in a while, say about every 30 days, I water the plants in my kitchen window-box with water, to which a little nitrate of soda has been added. Use about a level tablespoonful of nitrate of soda, in two quarts of water. Pour this all over the surface of the soil. For the regular watering of the box, however, I simply pour water down the tube in the corner of the box, and allow the moisture to rise in the soil. After watering, I always remove the cork, and drain off the water, as it is likely to become stagnant. It does not do to have the bottom soil wet all the time.

"A kitchen-window garden of this kind may seem trifling, but you will be surprised, to see the quantity of materials it supplies, for flavoring and garnishing the dishes, that are prepared for the table."

That concludes W.R.B.'s letter. If you have any questions about houseplants, send them to me. I'll forward them to W. R. B. He will send you a personal answer, and perhaps some printed information on vegetable and flower gardens, if you ask for it.

Here's the menu, and a good one it is: Sausage and Fried Pineapple; Creamed Salsify or Oyster Plant, or some other vegetable; Peas; and Old-Fashioned Rice Pudding. Ever taste sausage and fried pineapple? It's delicious. Shape the sausage into cakes, and fry it in the usual way. Then brown slices of canned pineapple, in the sausage fat. Serve the cakes of sausage on top of the Fried Pineapple. The recipe for Old-Fashioned Rice Pudding is in the Radio Cookbook, so I won't broadcast that.

However, I have a recipe here for Creamed Salsify, or Oyster Plant, which is not in the Radio Cookbook. Perhaps you'd like to have it, for your radio notebooks. Only three ingredients, for Creamed Salsify:

2 bunches salsify, or oyster plant
Cream sauce, and
Salt

Three ingredients, again: (Repeat ingredients)

Wash and scrape the salsify. Cut it into small pieces. While preparing the salsify, keep it in cold water, to prevent it from turning dark. Boil in unsalted water, for 30 minutes, or until tender. Prepare a cream sauce, using 1 cup milk, 2 tablespoons flour, 2 tablespoons butter, and 1/2 teaspoon salt, and pour this over the cooked salsify. Reheat, and serve with a little chopped parsley sprinkled over the top.

To repeat the menu: Sausage and Fried Pineapple; Creamed Salsify or Oyster Plant, or some other vegetable; Peas; and Old-Fashioned Rice Pudding.